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AN
ADDRESS
TO THE PEOPLE OF THE U. STATES.
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A LETTER
FROM THE
HON. TIMOTHY PICKERING,
A SENATOR OF THE UNITED STATES
FROM THE
STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS,
EXHIBITING TO HIS CONSTITUENTS
A VIEW OF THE IMMINENT DANGER
OF AN
UNNECESSARY AND RUINOUS WAR.
ADDRESSED TO
HIS EXCELLENCY JAMES SULLIVAN,
GOVERNOR OF THE SAID STATE.

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BUTLER.

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1808.

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TO THE PEOPLE.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

AT a crisis like the present, when apprehension and dismay darken the prospects of our public affairs ; when ruin is hovering around us like a mist, and when the causes of our calamity are carefully concealed from us ; when the seal of mystery is impressed upon our councils, and all confidence is withdrawn from the people ; it is the sacred duty of every friend to liberty, of whatever political sect or party, to examine with candor, the ground on which we stand ; to watch with vigilance, the measures of government, and to raise his voice without fear, in the cause of his country.

Deeply impressed with these momentous considerations, we claim for a moment, the indulgence of our countrymen. Far be it from us to encourage a spirit of groundless clamor, or of disrespect to the laws. Embarked with you in one common cause, attached, firmly attached, to our republican institutions, highly prizing the peace of our country, and that constitution, under which we have in former years, enjoyed so much liberty and happiness, our only object is to secure the continuance of that peace, if it can be honorably secured, and to preserve inviolate to us and to our children, that constitution which guarantees our independence. From the recent conduct of our national government, and from the ruinous measures which have lately been adopted, we are compelled to believe, that nothing but the powerful voice of an injured and degraded people can preserve us from national destruction. Let then that voice be heard—Let us respectfully, but in a tone of manly boldness, and united energy, remonstrate with our government, and demand of them why these things are so—Let us request of them a fair and candid disclosure of our real situation with foreign nations, and a complete developement of the hidden causes which have lead to the adoption of measures, so disastrous to our country. Too long, already, have we reposed in the lap of executive confidence. Let us rouse from the deadly lethargy, while yet “ *Our locks are not shorn, nor our great strength gone from us.*” As yet we have the right of public debate ; the right of petition and remonstrance—Let us unitedly exercise these vestiges of popular privileges, or we shall soon see law and justice take their flight, with our prosperity and our peace ; and our liberty and independence will find their last intrenchment in the grave of our constitution.

These are not the vain and idle apprehensions of visionary theorists, nor the unfounded clamors of disappointed ambition. Every day brings “ confirmation strong as proof from holy writ,” that they are serious and solemn truths. Else why, when every portion of our country, from one extremity of the Union to the

other is agitated with alarm & dismay, when ruin is stalking thro' the land, with a step rapid as time, and certain as death; why, at such a crisis, are the causes of all this wretchedness, carefully concealed from the eyes of the sufferers? Have not the government every inducement to alleviate this suffering, by a frank avowal of the causes which produced it? If it could be done, *without dishonor to themselves*, would they not anticipate the solicitude of an anxious people, and endeavor to reconcile them to their suffering, by proving its necessity? From this death-like and treacherous silence, are we not justified in the belief, that they dare not remove the curtain which conceals the dark mysteries of the executive cabinet? If the honor, the interest, or the safety of the nation required it, full well they know, that the American people would cheerfully submit to every privation, and suffer every hardship.—No, fellow-citizens, our administration would never shroud themselves in “clouds and darkness” if their measures would bear the light. Truth and honor seek for no concealment; and in a government dependent upon the people for its existence and support, to withhold from them that information which they have a right to require, betrays either an unpardonable want of confidence in their patriotism and virtue, or a consciousness that the measures are such as patriotism and virtue could not approve. Is not the *Embargo* such a measure? What were the causes which produced it? And what are the objects which it is intended to accomplish? We venture to assert that no man, not admitted within the veil of presidential secrecy, can give a satisfactory answer to these enquiries. Surely a measure fraught with such mighty evils to every class of the community, ought not to be adopted, without reasons which deeply affect the honor of the nation, and in which every individual is highly interested. Yet not only the people, but the legislature themselves, are kept in total ignorance of the causes of this overwhelming calamity.

But the nature, the tendency & the incalculable evils of this direful experiment are so clearly demonstrated, in the annexed letter from Col. Pickering, our able and upright Senator in Congress, and the only course which can save us from destruction is so explicitly pointed out by him, that we cannot better discharge our duty than by annexing his communication to this address.—His love of his country is too ardent and sincere to suffer him to remain silent in this disastrous crisis. His patriotism is too pure, his integrity too inflexible, to bend to the time serving policy of any administration—

“ *He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for his power to thunder.*”

He speaks the words of “truth and soberness,” of honor and

integrity, and with Roman firmness, and at every hazard, he attempts to "rescue from the deep, the drowned honor of his country."

We cannot express our amazement that the Governor of our Commonwealth, thro' whom this interesting document was addressed to the Legislature, should attempt to keep from their sight information so important and desirable.

Fellow-citizens, the gulph of ruin yawns wide before us, and those whom we have appointed to guard us from danger, & whose duty it is, to descry it from afar, seem determined to hurry us blindfold, down the dreadful precipice. But thank Heaven, the attempt to suppress this letter, did not succeed. It has providentially found the light, and is now presented to an anxious and degraded people.

Read, we conjure you, read with attention and as for your lives this interesting communication, and if you have a spark of patriotism glowing in your breasts, it will kindle into a flame, at the dangers which threaten our ill fated Republic. History scarcely furnishes an example of a nation thus suddenly thrown from the height of prosperity and glory, and threatened with such deep and dreadful ruin.

Let us for a moment call to mind the late unrivalled progress of our national and individual growth, that we may the more sensibly feel the sad reverse, and the necessity, the absolute necessity of a vigorous effort to regain the ground we have lost. Until this sudden and unexpected interruption of our prosperity, peace smiled in our borders and plenty enriched our stores. The produce of the husbandman found a ready market; and a liberal price rewarded his laborious industry. Our commerce was flourishing to a degree unparalleled in the history of nations. The wants of distant nations were supplied by our active enterprise, and we in return received from them the full supply of all our necessities. Every breeze wafted us plenty, and the most distant and unfrequented oceans were whitened with our sails.

But the wand of the mighty Conjuror of Europe has been stretched across the Atlantic, and these goodly prospects have vanished at his touch. It cannot be denied, that the course which we are now pursuing, must terminate in a war with G. Britain. A war without necessity, without hope, and almost without a plausible pretext for its justification. An anxious people, a people who must bear the "heat and burden of the day," are vainly inquiring "why are we thus rashly hurried on to war?" Why is our late flourishing commerce to be annihilated and destroyed, and why are our numerous and defenceless seaports to be exposed to ruin and conflagration? Is not the hand of Napoleon in this thing? It is much to be feared that "he who controls the def-

inies of Europe sways likewise the councils of this tottering Republic." Upon no other supposition will the measures of our government admit of explication. And are you ready, fellow citizens, to submit to this degradation? In an alliance with France, we should seal our own destruction. Flattered for a moment with the name of allies, we should soon be made a miserable appendage to the train of greatness, and be chained to the car of the conqueror to increase the splendor of his triumph. Look at the map of Europe, and in the history of those numerous nations which have fallen a sacrifice to the overwhelming ambition of France, read our own destiny. But there is a way open for escape.—If you regard the interests, the safety, or the honor of our common country; if you value our independence, and prize the constitution which secures it; if you would avoid the chains which are already forging to rivet you in slavery, then awake at the call of patriotism. Make known the will of the nation. Let the people rouse, and we may yet save ourselves from ruin, and our country from the reproaches of posterity.

THOUSANDS.

COL. PICKERING'S LETTER.

CITY OF WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 16, 1808.

SIR,

IN the even current of ordinary times, an address from a Senator in Congress to his constituents might be dispensed with. In such times, the proceedings of the Executive and Legislature of the United States, exhibited in their *public acts*, might be sufficient. But the present singular condition of our country, when its most interesting concerns, wrapt up in mystery, excite universal alarm, requires me to be no longer silent. Perhaps I am liable to censure, at such a crisis, for not sooner presenting to you and them, such a view of our national affairs as my official situation has placed in my power. I now address it to you, Sir, as the proper organ of communication to the legislature.

The attainment of TRUTH is ever desirable: and I cannot permit myself to doubt that the statement I now make must be acceptable to all who have an agency in directing the affairs, and who are guardians of the interests of our *Commonwealth*, which so materially depend on the measures of the *Government* of the *nation*. At the same time I am aware of the jealousy with which, in these unhappy days of party dissensions, my communications may, by some of my constituents, be received. Of this I will not complain: while I earnestly wish the same jealousy to be extended towards all pub-

lic men. Yet I may claim some share of attention and credit—that share which is due to the man who defies the world to point, in the whole course of a long and public life, at one instance of deception, at a single departure from TRUTH.

The EMBARGO demands the first notice. For perhaps no act of the National Government has ever produced so much solicitude, or spread such universal alarm. Because all naturally conclude, that a measure pregnant with incalculable mischief to all classes of our fellow-citizens, would not have been proposed by the president, and adopted by Congress, but for causes deeply affecting the interests and safety of the nation. It must have been under the influence of this opinion that the legislative bodies of some States have expressed their approbation of the Embargo, either explicitly or by implication.

The following were all the papers laid by the President before Congress, as the grounds of the Embargo.

1. The proclamation of the King of Great-Britain, requiring the return of his subjects, the seamen especially, from foreign countries, to aid, in this hour of peculiar danger in the defence of their own. But it being an acknowledged principle, that every nation has a right to the service of its subjects in time of war, that proclamation could not furnish the slightest ground for an Embargo.

2. The extract of a letter from the Grand Judge Regnier to the French Attorney General for the Council of Prizes. This contained a partial interpretation of the imperial blockading decree of November 21, 1806. This decree, indeed, and its interpretation, present flagrant violations of our neutral rights, and of the existing treaty between the United States and France : but still, the execution of that decree could not (from the small number of French cruisers) extensively interrupt our trade. These two papers were public.

3. The letter from our Minister, Mr. Armstrong, to Mr. Champagny, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs : and

4. Mr. Champagny's answer. Both these ought, in form or substance, also to have been made publick. The latter would have furnished to our nation some idea of the views and expectations of France. But both were withdrawn by the President, to be deposited among other Executive secrets : while neither presented any new ground to justify an Embargo.

In the Senate, these papers were referred to a committee. The committee quickly reported a bill for laying an Embargo, agreeably to the President's proposal. This was read a first, a second, and a third time, and passed ; and all in the short compass of about four hours ! A little time was repeatedly asked, to obtain further information, and to consider a measure of such moment, of such universal concern : but these requests were denied. We were hur-

ried into the passage of the bill, as if there was danger of its being rejected, if we were allowed time to obtain further information, and deliberately consider the subject. For to that time our vessels were freely sailing on foreign voyages ; and in a national point of view, the departure of half a dozen or a dozen more, while we were inquiring into the necessity or expediency of the embargo, was of little moment. Or if the danger to our vessels, seamen and merchandize had been so extreme as not to admit of one day's delay, ought not that extreme danger to have been exhibited to Congress ? The Constitution which requires the President " to give to Congress information of the state of the union," certainly meant, not partial, but complete information on the subject of a communication, so far as he possessed it. And when it enjoins him " to recommend to their consideration such measures as he should judge necessary and expedient," it is certainly intended that those recommendations should be bottomed on information *communicated*, not on *facts withheld*, and locked up in the executive cabinet. Had the publick safety been at stake, or any great public good been presented to our view, but which would be lost by a moment's delay ; there would have been some apology for dispatch, though none for acting *without due information*. In truth, the measure appeared to me then, as it still does, and as it appears to the public, without a sufficient motive, without a legitimate object. Hence the general inquiry—" For what is the Embargo laid ?" And I challenge any man not in the secrets of the Executive to tell. I know, Sir, that the President said the papers above mentioned " showed that great and increasing dangers threatened our vessels, our seamen & our merchandize : " but I also know that they exhibited no new dangers ; none of which our merchants and seamen had not been well apprized. The British proclamation had many days before been published in the newspapers, [the copy laid before us by the President had been cut out of a newspaper ;] and so had the substance, if not the words of Regnier's letter. Yet they had excited little concern among merchants and seamen, the preservation of whose persons and property was the *professed* object of the President's recommendation of an Embargo. The merchants & seamen could accurately estimate the dangers of continuing their commercial operations ; of which dangers, indeed, the actual premiums of insurance were a satisfactory gauge. Those premiums had very little increased : by the British proclamation not a cent : and by the French decree so little as not to stop commercial enterprizes. The great numbers of vessels loading or loaded, and prepared for sea ; the exertions every where made, on the first rumour of the Embargo, to dispatch them, demonstrate the President's dangers to be *imaginary*—to have been *assumed*. Or if great and real dangers, unknown to commercial men, were impending, or sure to fall

how desirable was it to have had them *officially* declared and published ! This would have produced a voluntary embargo, and prevented every complaint. Besides, the dangers clearly defined & understood, the publick mind would not have been disquieted with imaginary fears, the more tormenting, because uncertain.

It is true that considerable numbers of vessels were collected in our ports, and many held in suspense : not however, from any new dangers which *appeared*, but from the mysterious conduct of our affairs, after the attack on the Chesapeake ; and from the painful apprehension that the course the President was pursuing would terminate in war. The National Intelligencer (usually considered as the Executive newspaper) gave the alarm ; and it was echoed through the United States. War, probable or inevitable war, was the constant theme of the newspapers, and of the conversations, as was reported, of persons supposed to be best informed of Executive designs. Yet amid this din of war, no adequate preparations were seen making to meet it. The order to detach a hundred thousand militia to fight the British navy (for there was no appearance of an enemy in any other shape) was so completely absurd, as to excite, with men of common sense, no other emotion than ridicule. Not the shadow of a reason that could operate on the mind of a man of common understanding can be offered in its justification. The refusal of the British officer to receive the frigate Chesapeake as a *prize*, when tendered by her commander, is a demonstration that the attack upon her was exclusively for the purpose of taking their deserters ; and not intended as the commencement of a *war* between the two nations. The President knew that the British had no invading army to land on our shores ; and the detached militia would be useless, except against land-forces. Why then was this order for the Militia given ?—The nature of the case, and the actual state of things, authorize the inference, that its *immediate*, if not its *only* object, was to increase the publick alarm, to aggravate the publick resentment against Great-Britain, to excite a war pulse ; and in the height of this artificial fever of the publick mind, which was to be made known in Great-Britain, to renew the demands on her government ; in the poor expectation of extorting, in that state of things, concessions of points which she had always considered as her *rights*, and which at all times and under all circumstances, she had uniformly refused to relinquish. The result of the subsequent negotiation at London has shown how utterly unfounded was the President's expectation, how perfectly useless all this bluster of war. While no well informed man doubted that the British Government would make suitable reparation for the attack on the Chesapeake. The President himself, in his proclamation, had placed the affair on that footing. A rupture between the two nations, said he, “ is equally opposed to the interests of both, as it is to assurances of the most friendly dispositions on the part of the British Government,

in the midst of which this outrage was committed. In this light the subject cannot but present itself to that Government, and strengthen the motives to an honorable reparation for the wrong which has been done." And it is now well known that such reparation might have been promptly obtained in London, had the President's instructions to Mr. Monroe been compatible with such an adjustment. He was required not to negotiate on this single, transient act, (which when once adjusted was for ever settled,) but, in connection with another claim of long standing, and, to say the least, of doubtful right ; to wit, the exemption from impressment of *British* seamen found on board American *merchant* vessels. To remedy the evil arising from its exercise, by which our own citizens were sometimes impressed, the attention of our Government, under every administration, had been earnestly engaged : but no practicable plan has yet been contrived : while no man who regards the truth, will question the disposition of the British Government to adopt any arrangement that will secure to Great-Britain the services of *her own subjects*. And now, when the unexampled situation of that country (left alone to maintain the conflict with France and her numerous dependent States—left alone to withstand the Power which menaces the liberties of the world) rendered the aid of all her subjects more than ever needful ; there was no reasonable ground to expect that she would yield the right to take them when found on board the merchant vessels of any nation. Thus to insist on her yielding this point, and inseparably to connect it with the affair of the Chesapeake, was tantamount to a determination not to negotiate at all.

I write, Sir, with freedom ; for the times are too perilous to allow those who are placed in high and responsible situations to be silent or reserved. The peace and safety of our country are suspended on a thread. The course we have seen pursued leads on to war—to a war with Great Britain—a war absolutely without necessity—a war which whether disastrous or successful, must bring misery and ruin to the United States : *misery* by the destruction of our navigation and commerce (perhaps also of our fairest seaport towns and cities) the loss of markets for our produce, the want of foreign goods and manufactures, and the other evils incident to a state of war ; and *ruin*, by the loss of our liberty and independence. For if with the aid of our arms Great-Britain were subdued ;—from that moment, (though flattered perhaps with the name of *allies*,) we should become the *Provinces of France*. This is a result so obvious, that I must crave your pardon for noticing it. Some advocates of Executive measures admit it. They acknowledge that the navy of Britain is our shield against the overwhelming power of France.—Why then do they persist in a course of conduct tending to a rupture with Great-Britain ?—Will it be believed that it is principally, or solely, to procure inviolability to

the merchant flag of the United States ? In other words to protect all seamen, *British subjects*, as well as our own citizens, on board our merchant vessels ? It is a fact that this has been made the greatest obstacle to an amicable settlement with Great Britain.— Yet (I repeat) it is perfectly well known that she desires to obtain only her own subjects ; and that American citizens, impressed by mistake, are delivered up on duly authenticated proof. The evil we complain of arises from the impossibility of always distinguishing the persons of two nations, who a few years since were one people, who exhibit the same manners, speak the same language, and possess similar features. But seeing that we seldom hear complaints in the great *navigating States*, how happens there to be such extreme sympathy for American seamen at *Washington* ? Especially in gentlemen from the interior States, which have no seamen, or from those Atlantick States whose native seamen bear a very small proportion to those of New-England ? In fact, the causes of complaint are much fewer than are pretended. They rarely occur in the States whose seamen are chiefly natives. The first merchant in the United States, in answering my late inquiry about British impressments, says, “ Since the Chesapeake affair we have had no cause of complaint. I cannot find one single instance where they have taken one man out of a merchant vessel. I have had more than twenty vessels arrive in that time, without one instance of a man being taken by them. Three *Swedes* were taken out by a *French Frigate*. I have made inquiry of all the masters that have arrived in this vicinity, and cannot find any complaints against the British cruisers.”

Can gentlemen of known *hostility* to foreign commerce in our own vessels—who are even willing to annihilate it, (and such there are—) can these gentlemen plead the cause of our *seamen* because they really wish to protect them ? Can those desire to protect our seamen, who, by laying an unnecessary embargo, expose them by thousands to *starve or beg* ?—One gentleman has said (and I believe he does not stand alone) that sooner than admit the principle that G. B. had a right to take her own subjects from our merchant vessels, he would abandon commerce altogether !—To what will every man in New England and the other navigating States, ascribe such a sentiment ? A sentiment which, to prevent the temporary loss of five men, by impress, would reduce fifty thousand to beggary ? But for the Embargo, thousands depending on the ordinary operations of commerce, would now be employed. Even under the restraints of the orders of the British government, retaliating the French imperial decree, very large portions of the world remain open to the commerce of the United States. We may yet pursue our trade with the British dominions, in every part of the globe ; with Africa, with China, and with the colonies of France, Spain, and Holland. And let me ask, whether in the midst of a profound peace,

when the powers of Europe, possessing colonies, would, as formerly, confine the trade with them to their own bottoms, or admit us, as foreigners, only under great limitations, we could enjoy a commerce much more extensive than is practicable at this moment, if the embargo were not in the way? Why then should it be continued? Why rather was it ever laid? Can those be legitimate reasons for the Embargo which are concealed from Congress, at the moment when they are required to impose it? Are the reasons to be found in the dispatches from Paris? These have been moved for; and the motion was quashed by the advocates for the Embargo. Why are these dispatches withheld by the Executive? Why, when all classes of citizens anxiously inquire, "For what is the Embargo laid?" is a satisfactory answer denied? Why is not *Congress* made acquainted with the actual situation of the U. States in relation to France? Why, in this dangerous crisis, are Mr. Armstrong's letters to the Secretary of State absolutely withheld, so that a line of them cannot be seen? Did they contain no information of the demands and intentions of the French Emperor? Did the *Revenge* sail from England to France, & there wait three or four weeks for dispatches of no importance? If so, why regardless of the publick solicitude, are their contents so carefully concealed? If really unimportant, what harm can arise from telling Congress and the nation, *officially*, that they contain nothing of moment to the safety, the liberty, the honor, or the interests of the United States? On the contrary, are they so closely locked up, because they will not bear the light? Would their disclosure rouse the spirit of the people, still slumbering in blind confidence in the Executive? Has the French Emperor declared that he will have no neutrals? Has he required that *our ports*, like those of his vassal states in Europe, be *shut against British commerce*? Is the Embargo a *substitute*, a *milder form* of compliance with that harsh demand, which if exhibited in its naked and insulting aspect, the American spirit might yet resent? Are we still to be kept profoundly ignorant of the declarations and avowed designs of the French Emperor, although these may strike at our liberty and independence? And, in the mean time, are we, by a thousand irritations, by cherishing prejudices, and by exciting fresh resentments, to be drawn gradually into a war with Great-Britain? Why, amidst the extreme anxiety of the publick mind, is it still kept on the rack of fearful expectation, by the President's portentous silence respecting his French dispatches?—In this concealment there is danger. In this concealment must be wrapt up the real cause of the Embargo. On any other supposition it is inexplicable.

I am alarmed, Sir, at this perilous state of things, I cannot repress my suspicions, or forbear thus to exhibit to you the grounds on which they rest. The people are advised to repose implicit confidence in the National Government: In that unbounded confi-

dence lies our danger. Armed with that confidence, the Executive may procure the adoption of measures which may overwhelm us with ruin, as surely as if he had an army at his heels. By false policy, or by inordinate fears, our country may be betrayed and subjugated to France, as surely as by corruption. I trust, Sir, that no one who knows me will charge it to vanity when I say, that I have some knowledge of publick men and of publick affairs : and on that knowledge, and with solemnity, I declare to you, that I have no confidence in the wisdom or correctness of our publick measures : that our country is in imminent danger : that it is essential to the public safety, that the blind confidence in our Rulers should cease ; that the State Legislatures should know the facts and reasons on which important general laws are founded ; *and especially that those States, whose farms are on the ocean, and whose harvests are gathered in every sea, should immediately and seriously consider how to preserve them.* In all the branches of Government, commercial information is wanting ; and in "this desert," called a city, that want cannot be supplied. Nothing but the sense of the commercial States, clearly and emphatically expressed, will save them from ruin.

Are our thousands of ships and vessels to rot in our harbours ? Are our sixty thousand seamen and fishermen to be deprived of employment, and, with their families, reduced to want and beggary ? Are our hundreds of thousands of farmers to be compelled to suffer their millions in surplus produce to perish on their hands ; that the President may make an experiment on *our* patience and fortitude, and on the towering pride, the boundless ambition, and unyielding perseverance of the Conqueror of Europe ? Sir, I have reason to believe that the President contemplates the continuance of the Embargo until the French Emperor repeals his decrees, violating as well his treaty with the United States as every neutral right ; and until Britain thereupon recalls her retaliating orders ! By that time we may have neither ships nor seamen : and that is precisely the point to which some men wish to reduce us. To see the *improvidence* of this project (to call it by no harsher name, & without adverting to ulterior views) let us look back to former years.

Notwithstanding the well founded complaints of some individuals, and the murmers of others ; notwithstanding the frequent Executive declarations of maritime aggressions committed by Great Britain ; notwithstanding the outrageous decrees of France and Spain, and the wanton spoliations practised and executed by their cruisers and tribunals, of which we sometimes hear a faint whisper ; the commerce of the United States has hitherto prospered beyond all example. Our citizens have accumulated wealth ; and the publick revenue, annually increasing, has been the President's annual boast.

These facts demonstrate, that although Great Britain, with her thousand ships of war, could have destroyed our commerce, she has really done it no essential injury ; & that the other belligerents, heretofore restrained by some regard to National Law, and limited by the small number of their cruisers, have not inflicted upon it any deep wound. Yet in this full tide of success, our commerce is suddenly arrested : an alarm of war is raised : fearful apprehensions are excited : the merchants, in particular, thrown into a state of consternation, are advised, by a voluntary embargo, to keep their vessels at home. And what is the cause of this mighty but mischievous alarm ? We know it in its whole extent. *It was the unauthorized attack of a British naval officer on the American frigate Chesapeake, to search for and take some deserters known to have been received on board, who had been often demanded, and as often refused to be delivered up.* As was expected by all considerate men, and by the President himself (as I have before observed) the British Government, on the first information of the unfortunate event (and without waiting for an application) disavowed the act of its officer—disclaimed the principle of searching National armed vessels—and declared its readiness to make suitable reparation, as soon as the state of the case should be fully known.

Under such circumstances, who can justify this alarm of war ? An alarm which greatly disquieted the publick mind, and occasioned an interruption of commerce extremely injurious to our merchants and sea-faring citizens.

I will close this long letter by stating all the existing pretences—for there are no causes—for a war with Great-Britain.

1. The British ships of war, agreeably to a right claimed and exercised for ages, a right claimed and exercised during the whole of the administrations of Washington, of Adams, and of Jefferson,—continue to take some of the British seamen found on board our merchant vessels, and with them a small number of ours, from the impossibility of always distinguishing Englishmen from citizens of the United States. On this point our Government well know that Great-Britain is perfectly willing to adopt any arrangement that can be devised, which will secure to her service *the seamen who are her own subjects*; and at the same time exempt ours from impressment

2. The merchant vessels of France, Spain and Holland, being driven from the ocean, or destroyed, the commerce of those countries with one another, and with their colonies, could no longer be carried on by themselves. Here the vessels of neutral nations came in to their aid, and carried on nearly the whole commerce of those nations. With their seamen thus liberated from the merchant service, those nations, in the present and preceding wars, were enabled to man their ships of war ; and the neutral vessels and seamen supplying their places, became *in fact*, though not *in name*, auxiliaries

in war. The commerce of those nations, without one armed ship on the sea appropriated for its protection, was intended thus to be secured under neutral flags ; while the merchant vessels of Great-Britain, with its numerous armed ships to guard them, were exposed to occasional captures.—Such a course of things Great-Britain has resisted, not in the present only, but in former wars ; at least as far back as that of 1756. And she has claimed and maintained a right to impose on this commerce some limits and restraints ; because it was a commerce which was denied by those nations to neutrals in times of peace ; because it was a commerce of immense value to the subjects of her enemies ; and because it filled their treasuries with money to enable them to carry on their wars with Great-Britain.

3. The third and only remaining pretence for war with Great-Britain, is the unfortunate affair of the Chesapeake ; which having been already stated and explained, I will only remark here, that it is not to be believed that the British Government, after being defeated, as before mentioned, in its endeavours to make reparation in London, for the wrong done by its servant, would have sent hither a special envoy to give honourable satisfaction, but from its sincere desire to close this wound, *if our own Government would suffer it to be healed.*

Permit me now to ask, what man, impartially viewing the subject, will have the boldness to say that there exists any cause for plunging the United States into a war with Great-Britain ? Who that respects his reputation, as a man of common discernment, will say it ? Who that regards the interests and welfare of his country will say it ? Who then can justify, who can find an excuse for a course of conduct, which has brought our country into its present state of alarm, embarrassment and distress ? For myself, Sir, I must declare the opinion, that no *free* country was ever before so causelessly, and so blindly, thrown from the height of prosperity, and plunged into a state of dreadful anxiety and suffering. But from this degraded and wretched situation it is not yet too late to escape. Let the dispatches from our Minister in France be no longer concealed. Let the President perform the duty required of him by the Constitution ; by giving to Congress *full information of the state of the union* in respect to foreign nations. *Above all, let him unfold our actual situation with France.* Let him tell us what are the demands and proposals of her Ruler. Had these been *honourable* to the United States, would not the President have been eager to disclose them ? that they are of an entirely different nature, that they are *dishonourable*, that they are *ruinous to our commercial interests*, and *dangerous to our liberty and independence*, we are left to infer.

I hope, Sir, that the nature and magnitude of the subject will furnish a sufficient apology for the length and style of this letter. Perhaps some may deem it presumptuous thus to question the cor-

rectness of the proceedings of our Government. A strong sense of duty, and distressing apprehensions of National ruin, have forced the task upon me. To some the sentiments which, in the sincerity of my heart, I have expressed, may give offence : for often nothing offends so much as TRUTH. Yet I do not desire to offend any man. But when I see the dangerous extent of Executive influence : when I see the Great Council of the Nation called on to enact laws deeply affecting the interests of all classes of citizens, without adequate information of the reasons of that call : when I observe the deceptive glosses with which the mischiefs of the Embargo are attempted to be palliated ; and *posterior events* adduced as reasons to justify the measure : when I know that the risks of continuing their commercial pursuits against all *known dangers* can and will be more accurately calculated by our merchants than by our government : when if any *new dangers* to commerce were impending, of which our Merchants were uninformed, but of which the Government obtained the knowledge through its minister at Paris, or elsewhere, it was plainly the duty of the Executive to make those dangers known to Congress and the Nation : and since if so made known, the merchants and sea-faring citizens would, for their own interests and safety, have taken due precautions to guard against them : and as it hence appears certain that an Embargo was not necessary to the safety of “ our seamen, our vessels, or our merchandize : ” — when, Sir, I see and consider these things, and their evil tendency : in a word, when I observe a course of proceeding which to me appears calculated to mislead the publick mind to publick ruin ; I cannot be silent. Regardless, therefore, of personal consequences, I have undertaken to communicate these details ; with the view to dissipate dangerous illusions : to give to my Constituents correct information ; to excite inquiry ; and to rouse that vigilant jealousy which is characteristick of REPUBLICANS, and essential to the preservation of their rights, their liberties, and their independence.

I have the honor to be,

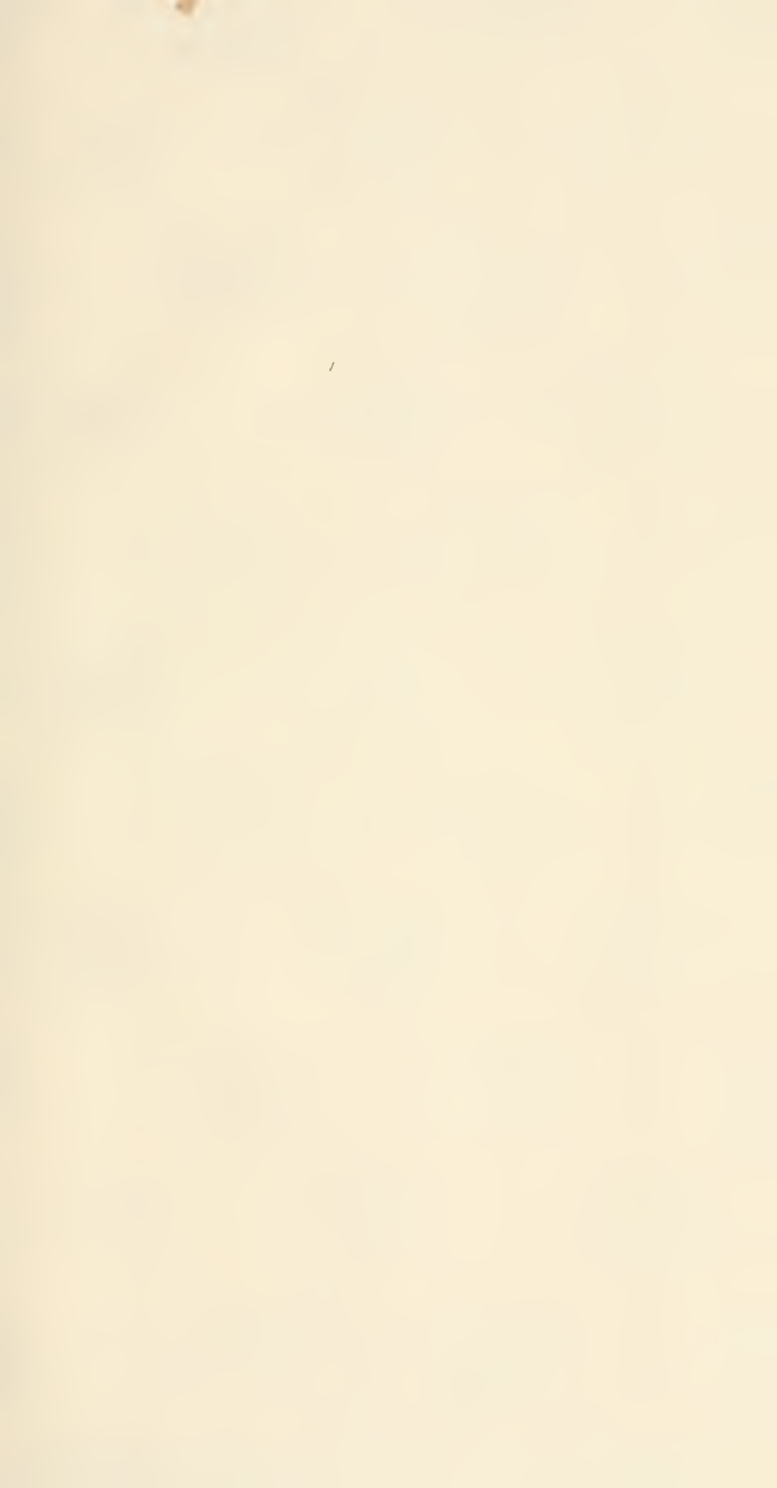
very respectfully, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

TIMOTHY PICKERING.

His Excellency JAMES SULLIVAN,

Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.







WERT BOOKBINDING

JAN 1989

Centerville, PA

